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The University of Dayton

News Release

NBC NEWS PLANS VISIT TO UD
TO INTERVIEW STUDENTS ABOUT ANTI-MALE SEXISM

DAYTON, Ohio, March 25, 1988--Concerned about the lighthearted way Tom Brokaw treated a recent "NBC Nightly News" story on the negative images of males in advertising and on television shows, the students in a University of Dayton literature class vented their frustration through letters to the anchorman.

Some of the students in Eugene August's "Modern Men: Images and Reality" class may now get the chance to express their opinions in front of a television camera.

An NBC correspondent and camera crew are expected to visit the campus on April 8 to interview the English professor and some of the male students from the popular class for a portion of a one-hour news special that's tentatively scheduled to air in early June, according to Sylvie Oberlander, an associate producer in the network's Washington bureau. The working title of the show is "The American Male."

"It's a documentary about what is happening to men in America," Oberlander said. "We want to use some of the students to introduce concepts men are uncomfortable about, such as always having to pay on dates and how they feel about (pressures) to be both macho and sensitive."

The news special also will focus on anti-male sexism in advertisements, what August said is commonly called "male bashing."

"In almost all cases where there is a jerk in a television show or advertisement, it's a male," observed August. "The real culprits--advertising executives and sitcom script writers--get off without much criticism. Many students feel that if a comedy or a comic commercial needs a jerk, those in charge are afraid that if they

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use a female as a fool, they will be attacked as 'sexist,' so they always use a male as a jerk."

In preparation for the piece, NBC researchers conducted lengthy telephone interviews with male students from the class. Of the 32 students in the class, 19 wrote commentaries critiquing the news segment. Most said Brokaw "trivialized" a serious subject. They expressed disappointment at the story's placement at the end of the newscast, which is normally reserved for "light" or humorous pieces.

"Males are taking all the insults," wrote Cliff Vascor. "If the roles were reversed in magazine ads and television commercials, females would be outraged. They would scream at being categorized as 'dumb blondes' and 'sex objects.' But since males take the abuse, it is considered 'poking fun.' There is no female equivalent of the term 'male chauvinist pig.'"

Another student, who described himself as "a red-blooded American male," doesn't take offense at seeing "inept men" on television.

"Males can either unite and lobby against the attention they're getting as previous groups have or they can choose to ignore the whole issue," Stephen Burke wrote. "We are bigger than this and can laugh at ourselves!"

"Modern Men: Images and Reality" is a literature course that attracts both male and female students. Readings for the course include Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman as well as an anthology of essays on the male experience called Men Freeing Men: Exploding the Myth of the Traditional Male. August, who has taught the course for eight years, said the class uses a men's studies approach to literature to raise questions about males and the male experience.

The University of Dayton is Ohio's largest private university and the ninth largest Catholic university in the nation.